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Alberta
AGRICULTURE

Research Report

CANADIANA
DEC 17 1986

Minister Elzinga outside the Legislature

It's a go!!!

Agriculture Minister Elzinga announces Farming For The Future renewal

Despite budget cuts in almost every sector, agricultural research in Alberta has received an important vote of confidence. On November 4 agriculture minister Peter Elzinga announced an extension to Alberta Agriculture's "Farming For The Future" agriculture research program. "We are committing $5 million per year for five years to 'Farming For The Future' — a total of $25 million — to help ensure the long-term survival of Alberta's farms and increase farmers' net incomes," he said. "Many good results have come out of this program, and I am confident that the new funds will help us build on that strong foundation."

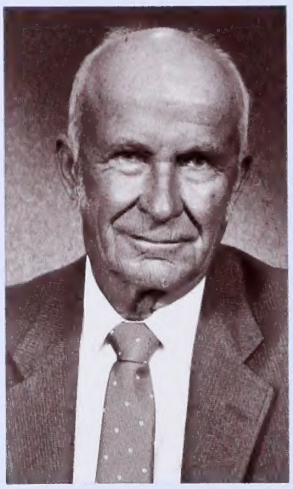
"Farming For The Future" became an entity in 1977, and started funding projects the following year. Since then, it's bankrolled over 700 research and on-farm demonstration projects, thanks to the $40 million investment from the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund. "We're particularly pleased with the number of producers who have participated in the 'On-Farm Demonstration' of new agricultural technology," says Mr. Elzinga. "These progressive farmers form the leading edge of those who are bringing 21st century agriculture into this province."

The On-Farm Demonstration Program is the practical application aspect of Farming For The Future. Under the program, farmers working with scientists, departmental specialists and extension staff conduct field tests of new technology. Over 300 producers have participated in the program since it started in 1982.

Agriculture is a $4 billion primary industry in Alberta, and further fuels a $4 billion food processing, manufacturing and service industry. Annual agriculture exports bring over $2 billion into the province. So, says Mr. Elzinga, it is important that researchers continue to develop ideas that will improve farming in the province, and transfer this technology to producers. This, he feels, can only be achieved through a strong partnership in research. "At a time of fiscal restraint, the responsible use of public funds dictates that the major agricultural research players in the province: governments; universities; and private industry, co-ordinate their efforts towards achieving positive results."

And, adds Dr. Arthur O. Olson, assistant deputy minister of research and resource development, the government's commitment to Alberta farmers is further emphasized by the five-year mandate given to Farming For The Future. This is an appreciable increase from the previous three-year funding mandate, and will generate further optimism among the research community. Says Dr. Olson: "From an agricultural research viewpoint, this expanded mandate is an important step in ensuring our agricultural industry has the kinds of technology we need."

FARMING FOR THE FUTURE



by Clare E. Anderson

Past Producer Member, Agricultural Research Council of Alberta
Past Chairman, Forage Program Committee of Farming For The Future

The Hon. Peter Elzinga's announcement that the Farming For The Future research program will be renewed for five years was good news for farmers and city dwellers alike.

For the last eight years it has been my great pleasure to sit as a member for the Agricultural Research Council of Alberta, and as Chairman of the Forages Committee of Farming For The Future. In those capacities I came to know the work of Farming For The Future first hand. While the program brings obvious benefits to farmers, urban Albertans should know that they are really the chief recipients of the spin-off and long-term dividends. Studies repeatedly show that the rate of return on each research dollar invested in agriculture is at least 10 to one. That translates into lower food prices, more food product variety, and less of our disposable income being spent on the purchase of our daily bread and butter.

I farm 2,000 acres of seed grain and cattle between Westlock and Barrhead, with my two sons. I've always farmed. I grew up on a farm. In fact, my operation is only a half-mile from the original homestead. I know just how important Farming For The Future has been for the farmer. Our grey-wooded soil was never rich or good. Research and demonstrations in forage have been real worthwhile, showing farmers how to manage their forage so that it is just as profitable as cereal grains.

The On-Farm Demonstration component of Farming For The Future has been very important for farmers who are worth their salt. It gives them a chance to try out new ideas they can't afford, or don't have the expertise to try themselves. They have financial support from the program, and the assistance of the expert staff at Alberta Agriculture and the universities.

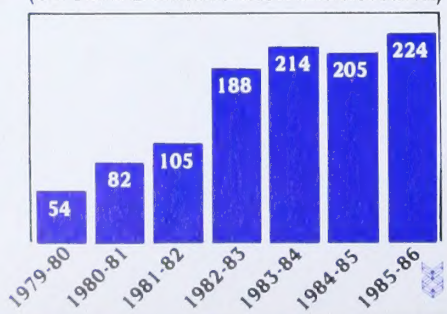
The renewed mandate of Farming For The Future on a five-year basis runs until 1992. But in reality, it is an investment that will benefit Albertans — be they farmers or city folk — for generations to come.

Mr. Anderson was inducted into the Alberta Agricultural Hall of Fame in 1986.

Where we have been

Eight years of achievement

- **1979** - 54 research projects funded with $2.1 million.
- **1980** - 82 research projects funded with $3.2 million.
- **1981** - 105 research projects funded with $4 million. Agriculture Canada in Beaverlodge develops a barley variety suitable for production in Northern Alberta, emphasizing early maturity, straw strength, resistance to scald, and tolerance to acid-high aluminum soils.
- **1982** - 188 research and On-Farm Demonstration projects funded with $5.9 million. The Canada-Alberta Canola Breeding Program with Alberta Agriculture and federal research stations in Saskatoon, Lethbridge and Beaverlodge is initiated to develop canola varieties suitable for the irrigated areas of Southern Alberta and the Peace River Region.
- **1983** - 214 research and On-Farm projects funded with $7.3 million. Fertilizer application techniques (tested through a joint Alberta Agriculture, Private Industry, University of Alberta, Agriculture Canada research project) reduce amounts required by 25%, extend crop rotation, reduce summerfallow and could generate $250 million in additional income annually for Alberta farmers.
- **1984** - 205 research and On-Farm Demonstration projects funded with $7.2 million. The Veterinary Infectious Disease Organization produces three vaccines, Rotavirus, Coronavirus and Hemorrhagic curing the largest infectious disease problems found in calves and turkeys.
  Agriculture Canada in Beaverlodge develops the climate-adapted Alberta bee, with improved productivity and overwintering characteristics.
- **1985** - 224 research and On-Farm Demonstration projects funded with $5.2 million. Agriculture Canada in Lethbridge develops and licenses "Saffire", the first Canadian safflower variety, useful for breaking disease and weed cycles, intensive dryland cropping, reducing summerfallow and preventing saline seeps.

Farming For The Future projects

(On-Farm Demonstration and Research)